



Sarah Mapps Douglass

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One short year ago, how different were my feelings on the subject of slavery! It is true, the wail of the captive sometimes came to my ear in the midst of my happiness, and caused my heart to bleed for his wrongs; but, alas! The impression was as evanescent as the early cloud and morning dew. I had formed a little world of my own, and cared not to move beyond its precincts. But how was the scene changed when I beheld the oppressor lurking on the border of my own peaceful home! I saw his iron hand stretched forth to seize me as his prey, and the cause of the slave became my own. I started up, and with one mighty effort threw from me the lethargy which had covered me as a mantle for years; and determined, by the help of the Almighty, to use every exertion in my power to elevate the character of my wronged and neglected race. One year ago, I detested the slaveholder; now I can pity and pray for him.

— Liberator

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Quick Facts

- * 1806-1887
- * African-American abolitionist and the daughter of famous abolitionists
- * Contributed to the Liberator and the Anglo-African Free Press

This page was researched and submitted by Valerie D. Levy. It was updated by Lauren Curtright on 1/8/05.



Sarah Mapps Douglass

Biograph

African-American abolitionist, teacher, writer, and public lecturer Sarah Mapps Douglass was born in Philadelphia on September 9, 1806, the daughter of renowned abolitionists Robert Douglass, Sr. and Grace Bustill Douglass. As a child, Douglass enjoyed life amongst Philadelphia's elite and was well educated by a private tutor. She became a teacher in New York, but returned to Philadelphia where she operated a successful private school for black women, giving women of color the opportunity to receive a high school education.

In September 1831, the Female Literary Association for free black women in Philadelphia was founded, and Douglass became secretary of the new society. Weekly meetings were devoted to reading and recitation, for the purpose of "mental cultivation" (Winch 106). From 1853 to 1877, Douglass served as a supervisor at the Institute for Colored Youth, a Quaker-sponsored establishment. During this time, she also acquired basic medical training at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania and at Pennsylvania Medical University, where she studied female health and hygiene -- subjects on which she lectured in evening classes and at meetings of the Banneker Institute. In 1855 she married African-American Episcopal clergyman William Douglass.

As the daughter of one of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society's founding members, Douglass became active in the abolitionist movement at a young age. She developed distaste for the prejudices of white Quakers early on and devoted much of her life to combating slavery and racism. Douglass developed a close friendship with white Quaker abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimke. At the urgings of the Grimke sisters, Douglass attended the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, held in New York in 1837 -- the first national convention of American antislavery women to integrate black and white members -- and served on the ten-member committee on arrangements for the convention.

Throughout her abolitionist career, Douglass also served as recording secretary, librarian, and manager for the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, contributed to both the *Liberator* and the *Anglo-African Magazine*, became a fundraiser for the black press, gave numerous public lectures, and served as vice-president of the women's branch of the Freedmen's Aid Society.



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